

of course we don't have any standards
for what is inappropriate either,
but it sounds like an appeal
not to morality
but to reason
although it is, of course, in fact,
just a better-sounding way
of laying down the law.

PRODIGY

i received an unexpected award today.
no, i didn't even have to apply for it;
it was just handed to me.
it wasn't exactly a literary prize ...
it wasn't exactly a tribute to athletic skills ...
it didn't include a citation of
some legendary sexual prowess ...
and no, it wasn't husband-of-the-year ...

but i did receive it at
a younger age than most.

and it does have monetary value.

yes, i was caught quite off my guard
when the pretty young lady behind the counter
presented me with,
at the cherubic age of fifty-four,
my Penguin's Frozen Yogurt Senior Citizen Discount Card.

VINCENT VAN GOGH: JOSEPH-ETIENNE ROULIN

everyone oohs and ahs
over the postman's beard.

to me it seems
a pretty stupid beard.

the pseudo-oriental, peacock-and-posy,
wallpaper-like backyard

is even worse.

i suppose this painting is worth millions today,
but i wouldn't have given five sous for it,
then as now.

yeah, i know about expressionism
for shit's sake.

can't we face it: even vincent van gogh
was entitled to an occasional bad-hair day.

MISUNDERSTOOD

i read in a novel by martin amis
that "what poetry is always about"
is "the cruelty of the poet's mistress,"

and i realize that i have been largely
innocent of this poetic crime
(as, i hope, of many others).

in point of fact i have written
much more prolifically about
my cruelty to my mistresses.

you would think that i would, by now,
have been apotheosized by
the feminist literary establishment
for this reversal of white male
heterosexual literary practice.

instead, for some reason that i will
never fully understand
they have not yet endorsed my candid admissions.

TOAD EXAMINES HIS CONSCIENCE

has he ever been guilty
of sexual hair-ass-ment?

no, and not of
hair-armpit-ment either?

all of his offenses have been
of the hair-cunt-ment variety.

— Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA